

July – September 1995 • Number 48

Jerusalem

PERSPECTIVE



**"Nearby stood six
stone water jars..."**

Perspective on This Issue

Turn to page 34 for "Sea of Galilee Museum Opens Its Doors." JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE is privileged to be the first to announce the opening of *Beit Ha-Oganim* (House of the Anchors), a museum dedicated to ancient fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Publishing in Israel often allows us to be first in reporting significant events in fields that relate to the life and words of Jesus.

Of ancient Jewish writings extant today, parables are prominent only in rabbinic literature. Parables, however, play an important role in the teaching of Jesus, too. Approximately one-third of Jesus' words preserved in the Synoptic Gospels are in parables. Jesus was keenly aware of the effectiveness of parables for communicating his message. In "The Power of Parables," p. 10, **Joseph Frankovic** helps us appreciate the art of parabletelling and the reasons for the magnetic charm of parables.

Frankovic is a student at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in Midrash under the direction of Professor Burt Visotsky. A regular contributor to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, Frankovic has worked closely with Jerusalem School members Robert Lindsey and Brad Young. Currently, he and his wife Janet reside in Jerusalem where he is a visiting research student at the Hebrew University.

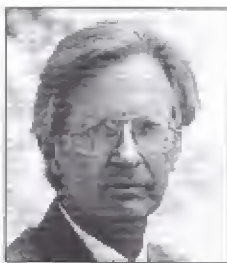
■ When teaching, Jesus referred to things which were familiar to his audience. Since many of his listeners were farmers, it was only natural that Jesus used agricultural images—sheep, goats, oxen, sowers, vinedressers, fields, vineyards, plows, and various good plants (wheat, grapes, figs) and bad plants (tares, thorns, thistles). Jesus employed these images repeatedly in his teaching. In one place, he gave a warning about false prophets, probably referring to insincere disciples, in which he contrasted figs and grapes with thorns and thistles (Mt. 7:16; Lk. 6:44). In "Beating the (Thorny) Bushes," p. 16, **Gloria Suess** attempts to identify the plants contrasted with figs and grapes in Jesus' saying.

Living in Israel inspired Suess to start photographing its plants. Started in 1987, her slide collection of Israeli flora numbers well over 1500 and is still growing. Now retired, Suess is concentrating on biblical flora, aided by a lifetime of Bible study and teaching fine arts. Her first article in this series on Gospel flora, "Lilies of the Field," appeared in the last issue of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE (No. 46 & 47, September–December 1994, pp. 18–23).



■ The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research is an unprecedented collaboration. This is perhaps the first time in history that a group of Jewish and Christian scholars have formally united to better understand the historical Jesus through study of the Synoptic Gospels. In "Why I Am a Member of the Jerusalem School," p. 22, **Halvor Ronning** explains his reasons for casting his lot with the Jerusalem School. Speaking from a Christian point of view, he describes the unique composition of the School and touches upon the theological implications of its work.

Although born in China, Ronning grew up in Chicago where he began his education. Later, he was a Fulbright scholar at the Ruprecht Karl Universität, Heidelberg, Germany, and a post-graduate student in Israel where he met his wife, Mirja. After completing an M.A. at Yale University and teaching in a Lutheran college in the United States, he and Mirja returned to Israel where they have reared four children. Ronning, an officially licensed Israeli tour



guide, is completing his Ph.D. at the Hebrew University under the direction of Professor David Flusser. Both Rennings are founding members of the Jerusalem School.

■ A large wedding in the Galilean town of Cana was the occasion for a famous miracle performed by Jesus—the changing of water to wine (John 2:1–11). When the supply of wine ran out during the wedding celebrations, Jesus had the servants fill six stone water jars (each holding about twenty to thirty gallons) to the brim. Not only did Jesus change the water to wine, but he changed it into choice wine—the quality was so good that it caused a bit of friction between the banquet-master and the bridegroom. Nineteen hundred years later large stone jars were uncovered in the Jewish Quarter excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem. In “Six Stone Water Jars,” p. 30, **Ronny Reich** uses the story in John’s Gospel to explain the function of these recently uncovered artifacts which proved to be a startling illustration of a detail in the Wedding at Cana story.

Historical sources and archaeological remains must be studied together. Archaeologists cannot ignore the historical sources, nor can historians ignore archaeological finds. Reich’s article illustrates the importance for New Testament scholars to be aware of the latest archaeological discoveries made in the land of Israel in order to interpret properly the texts they read.

From 1969 to 1978 Reich was a member of the archaeological team that excavated the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City. Since 1978 he has worked for the Israel Antiquities Authority as field archaeologist and director of documentation. Since 1989 Reich has directed the excavations in the Mamillah neighborhood, near Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem. He received his Ph.D. from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for his dissertation on *mikvaot* (ritual immersion baths).



JP

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE was launched in 1987. For its first twenty issues, *JP* was a monthly publication in newsletter format. In 1989 *JP* became a bimonthly journal of sixteen pages, and by December 1994, twenty-seven bimonthly issues had been produced. With this issue, *JP* becomes a forty-page quarterly magazine. The new, expanded format will allow us to communicate more effectively the most recent discoveries pertaining to the life and words of Jesus. Not every discovery is a textual discovery. Some discoveries, archaeological finds, for instance, can best be communicated visually. Even many important concepts in the Gospels are best communicated with a picture or an illustration. We publish *JP* in Israel, and want to take maximum advantage of our location to bring you photographs of the country’s topography, archaeological sites, and rich museum collections of biblical artifacts.

JP will now come to you every three months, however, you will receive 160 pages per year instead of 96. Though the magazine will have more pages (and more color), its subscription price will not change. Moreover, we now offer *JP* to new subscribers at half price! How can we afford to do this? We cannot without an increase in subscribers. Therefore, we appeal to you to share *JP* with your friends by giving gift subscriptions. With your support, *JP* will continue to grow.

David Birin

Editor

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

One-year (4 issues) US\$36 – \$24 – NIS90

Two-year (8 issues) US\$60 – \$40 – NIS150

Introductory A one-year trial subscription is \$18, \$12 or NIS45, half the regular price. This offer is valid for new subscribers only.

BACK ISSUES

Issues 1–20 (Oct. 1987–May 1989) four page issues are US\$1.50 – \$1.00 – NIS4.00 each. Issues 21–47 (Jul./Aug. 1989–May/Dec. 1994) sixteen-page issues are US\$5.00 – \$3.50 – NIS12.50 each.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE accepts payment in the following currencies: Israeli sheqel pound; United States, Canadian, Australian or New Zealand dollar; French, Swiss or Belgian franc; Norwegian or Danish kroner; Swedish krona; Dutch florin; Austrian schilling; German mark; Finnish markka. Prices in Israeli sheqels apply to delivery in Israel only.

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Credit card payments: *JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE* accepts VISA, MasterCard, Discover Card, American Express, Eurocard and barcard.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE is indexed in New Testament Abstracts, Religious and Theological Abstracts, Biblical Bibliographies, Biblica and International Review of Biblical Studies.

Printed in Israel. ISSN 0792-1157

Color Separation & Plates: Talia L. Jerusalem

Printing: Sobinsky, Tel Aviv

Articles published in *JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE* express the views of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or other members of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research.

To subscribe or request further information: *JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE*, P.O. Box 31320, 91317 Jerusalem, Israel. Tel. 072-2-335544; fax 072-2-335566. U.S. office: P.O. Box 2050, Redlands, CA 92373-0041. Tel. 909-793-4869; fax 909-793-1071. U.K. office: 15 Teddington Business Park, Station Road, Teddington, Middx., TW11 0BQ. Tel. 081-943-0363; Fax 081-943-3767.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE would like to thank Kenneth & Marci Beery of Fort Wayne, Indiana; Mary Brittain of Ocklawaha, Florida; Rodney & Diana Burrow of Birmingham, Alabama; Bruce Cliequenhof of Springfield, Ohio; Nancy Fullenwider of San Pedro, California; Nancy Gallagher of Stamford, Connecticut; Mary Lou Goetz of Ventura, California; Barbara Handley of Ojai, California; Lynn Helfinger of Eden, North Carolina; Kathy Honeycutt of Thousand Oaks, California; Eugene & Carol Hunn of West Carrollton, Ohio; Carl Johnson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Bobby J. Larkley of Winchester, Kentucky; Rodney & Cecile Ledeune of Conroe, Texas; Phil Leonti of Corona, California; Rebecca McCoy of Robinson, Illinois; Ronald & Jean Miterko of Trumbull, Connecticut; Kenneth Mudge of Redlands, California; Norman & Kathy Oswald of Arlington Heights, Illinois; Betty Panell of Hemetdale, California; Richard & Joanna Patton of San Pedro, California; Barbara Paulsen of Seattle, Washington; Daniel Pierre of Saugus, California; Mary Reynolds of Beaverton, Oregon; Douglas & Hannele Sorensen of Charlotte, North Carolina; Thelma Stadler of Lakewood, Colorado; Harold & Phyllis Thomas of Boise, Idaho; Forrest & Pat Turner of Angels Camp, California; Derek & Grace White of Teddington, Middx., England. Their generous contributions helped make this issue possible.

Jerusalem

P E R S P E C T I V E

Exploring the Jewish Background
to the Life and Words of Jesus



COVER: Rooms of the "Burnt House" after excavation. (See "Six Stone Water Jars," p. 30.) One room (in rear) has been left by the archaeologists as it was found, its floor covered with ash, charred beams and broken vessels. The house, located in the exclusive upper section of the Jerusalem Jesus knew, was torched by the besieging Roman army in 70 A.D. The stone table, stone jars and other vessels and implements were returned to the rooms after being restored in a laboratory. Photograph by Werner Braun.

10 ▶



16 ▼



34 ▶



Contents

July–September 1995 • Number 48

■ The Power of Parables *Joseph Frankovic*

10

What is the magnetism that Jesus' parables possess? They still delight and captivate audiences the way they did when they were first told. Rabbinic parables can help us to better appreciate Jesus' parables, and the three rabbinic parables presented in this article provide a window on the world of ancient Scripture interpretation of which Jesus was so much a part.

■ Beating the (Thorny) Bushes *Gloria E.M. Suess*

16

The biblical prophets speak frequently about thorns and thistles, so it is not surprising that we find references to these troublesome plants in the teaching of Jesus. In his famous saying that begins, "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:16; Lk. 6:44), Jesus mentions thorns and thistles along with grapes and figs. Though there are some twenty words in the Hebrew Scriptures that designate spiny plants, English versions of the Bible translate using general terms such as thistle, thorn and brambles. What is the true identity of the thorny plants to which Jesus refers?

■ Why I Am a Member of the Jerusalem School

22

Halvor Ronning

What motivates Jewish scholars to join Christian scholars in searching for the historical Jesus within the Synoptic Gospels? In this first-person essay, a Christian member of the Jerusalem School describes the role and contribution of the School's Jewish members and some of their reasons for interest in the Gospels.

■ Six Stone Water Jars *Ronny Reich*

30

In 1969 large stone containers were unearthed inside the "Burnt House" in the Jewish Quarter excavations of Jerusalem's Old City. "What were these vessels used for?" the archaeologists asked. The Gospel of John provided the answer.

■ Sea of Galilee Museum Opens Its Doors

34


A new museum in the Galilee is welcoming its first visitors. Devoted entirely to the Sea of Galilee—its history, its ancient fishing industry and its fishermen, including those, such as Jesus' disciples, who fished its waters in the first century—the new museum offers Christians a fascinating glimpse of gospel realia.

Departments

- 2 Perspective on This Issue
- 6 Readers' Perspective
- 29 Jerusalem School Affiliates
- 39 International Synoptic Society
- 39 The Jerusalem School
- 39 Glossary
- 39 Transliteration Key

Readers' Perspective

■ Gentilization of Scripture



Shalom! I am writing to you to ask you to send me JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE for one year at the special rate, as mentioned in *Prophecy Today*. I have previously helped purchase your magazine for my brother-in-law (a birthday present) and, as yet, he has not even allowed me to take one away to read. It must be good!

I praise God that He has raised you to remove the Gentilization (both Greek and Roman) of the Scriptures, and to help us *goyim* [Hebrew for "Gentiles" - Ed.] to fully comprehend the very essence of the life He gave us.

S.H.C. Hamilton
London, England

Having recently become interested in seeking the roots of the Jewish Messiah, it has been a great blessing to us after being Christian believers for over thirty years to find that there is so much more than we have so far learned in looking at the Word of God from a Gentile point of view.

We do trust the Lord will continue to guide you in revealing the Lord to those of the Gentile believers who probably, like ourselves, have missed out on so much.

Mr. & Mrs. H. Hilton
Wigan, Lancs., England

■ Searching for a "Reconstructed" Bible

The unquestionable misinterpretations of the Synoptic Gospels leave me wondering if there is any complete Bible that offers the correct translation of these Gospels from Hebrew. I know of none. If there are versions of the Bible that offer correct translations of only specific books, what are they? By piecing them together, I may have a

proper translation. I hope you can help me in my search for a "reconstructed" Bible. Unfortunately, I do not know Hebrew or Greek, so the possibility of translating biblical texts myself does not exist.

Anthony L. Abraham III
Oak Harbor, Washington
U.S.A.

In the July/August 1989 issue of JP, pp. 3-4, there was an article entitled, "Which Bible Translation?" by Dr. Ray Pritz of the Bible Society in Israel. In the same issue (p. 2), we published a lengthy response to a query similar to yours. We have published Hebrew reconstructions of portions of the Greek text of the Gospels (see pp. 3-31 in the May-August 1993 issue, and pp. 23-45 in the January-June 1994 issue). - Ed.

■ What's Wrong with John 21:7?

There seems to be a problem with John 21:7, "When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his cloak around him (for he was naked) and cast himself into the sea." Firstly, the text states that Peter was naked. Our pastor says that good Jews in that time never went fully naked. That was one objection they had to the Greek games. (I always assumed that John 21:7 meant that Peter had stripped for work down to a loincloth of some sort.) Secondly, if you are going to jump out of a boat into the water, to swim or even wade ashore, you don't put on clothes, you take them off!

If you or anyone there can shed any light on this in terms of the customs of the times, or the probable original wording, it will settle some arguments on this end.

Mrs. Mary R. Carse
Hinesburg, Vermont
U.S.A.

Mendel Nun responds:

Thank you for your letter and your questions about apparent problems in the text of John 21. I think you are right. There do seem to be unresolvable inconsistencies in John's version of the Miraculous Draught. On pages 41-44 of my The Sea of Galilee and Its Fishermen in the New Testament (Kibbutz Ein Gev: Kinnereth Sailing Co., 1989), I pointed out these and other inconsistencies. One should note the Roman mosaic found in North Africa (shown below) that depicts a naked fisherman standing in a boat with a cast-net draped over his arm. However, in ancient times a Jewish fisherman on the Sea of Galilee usually went naked only at night when fishing with a cast-net. The cast-net fisherman repeatedly had to dive under the water to retrieve his net and the fish in it. Out of modesty a Jewish fisherman wouldn't likely appear naked on the shore during the day. Since Peter was going ashore, he probably put on his clothes out of modesty.

It appears that many of the textual difficulties in John's gospel are the result of his emphasis on the philosophical-religious message rather than on historical and technical details.

Reader Attempts Contextual Reconstruction

I've been searching out passages such as Luke 9:1-6, Luke 10:1-12 and Matthew 9:37-10:16 that could be tagged "Jesus' Marching Orders." Matthew 5:43-48 has always presented problems. If Brad Young is correct in suggesting that the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-9 is part of Jesus' polemic against the Essenes (or whoever dwelt at Qumran), then I think Matthew 5:43-48 could be read after (or possibly before) Luke 16:1-9. Note that there is a contrast made between Jesus' exhortation to be *sons of your heavenly Father* who is perfect and makes His sun shine on both the righteous and unrighteous and the Essenes' snobbish claims to be the *sons of light* who are at war with the sons of darkness. Surely an attitude like that would not agree with the marching orders given to the twelve or to the seventy.

I believe it was needful for the disciples to understand that some would hear the message of the Kingdom gladly, and others would resist. Consequently, the context suggested by Robert Lindsey (JP 41 [Nov./Dec. 1993], 6, context 11), starting with Luke 9:51-56 as the incident, continuing with Luke 12:49-53 as the teaching,

and concluding with Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:47-50 as the twin parables, should be closely associated with the delivery of the marching orders.

Bob Mass
Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A.

Pickled Sardine Exports

I enjoyed reading Magen Broshi's article, "The Wealth of Herod the Great" (JP 37 [Mar./Apr. 1992], 3-6); however, Broshi failed to mention one very important product exported from the land of Israel. Pickled fish from the Sea of Galilee, mainly sardines, should have been included in his list of export items. According to Strabo, a first-century Roman geographer and historian, "at the place called *Taricheai* the lake supplies excellent fish for pickling" (*Geographica* XVI, 2:45). Apparently, the town of Magdala (called in Greek *Taricheai*, meaning, the place where fish are salted) on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee was the center of a large sardine pickling industry. Much of the industry's output was consumed locally, but a considerable amount was exported abroad.

Mendel Nun
Kibbutz Ein Gev, Israel

Magen Broshi responds:

The omission of pickled fish in my discussion of exports was intentional. I do not believe that pickled fish from the Sea of Galilee were a significant export for the country. Generally, in this period, more goods were imported than were exported.

Naked fisherman (in loincloth?) with cast-net draped over his right arm in typical ready position. Detail from a Roman mosaic found at Hadrumetum (modern Sousse in Tunisia).



MENDEL NUN

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■ Depressed by the Situation of Jewish Women

After reading Marvin Wilson's "Jewish Laws of Purity in Jesus' Day" (*JP* 37 [Mar./Apr. 1992], 11, 17), I must admit to finding the reality of the situation of women (e.g., anyone touching anything she sits on during menstruation, to be also unclean) depressing. How did women express their spirituality? Did they have any power? Mary was a woman. God loved and used her.

Mrs. C. M. Didsbury
Uphill, Weston-Super-Mare, Avon, England

Chana Safrai responds:

In discussing Jewish regulations of ritual purity, one should not forget that this system of laws is biblically based. Scripturally, there are five causes of uncleanness:

1. Contact with a dead body (Num. 19:11-22).
2. Contact with the carcasses of living creatures (Lev. 11:23-44).
3. Bodily discharges including emission of semen, menstrual flow (Lev. 15) and the woman's bleeding at childbirth (Lev. 12).
4. Skin diseases (Lev. 13-14).
5. Contact with sanctified space or objects. Those who prepared the ashes of the red heifer became ceremonially unclean as a result of their holy labor (Num. 19:1-10); the high priest was required to bathe himself with water between his various duties on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4, 23-24).

The Hebrew expressions *טָהוֹר* (*to-ho-RAH*, cleanness, purity) and *טָמֵא* (*tum-PAH*, uncleanness, impurity) are technical terms that have no positive or negative connotations. Scripturally, one is either in a state of purity, or not in a state of purity. Uncleanness is a human phenomenon, almost commonplace, and one must view the contrast between clean and unclean as a contrast between that which is holy and that which is not (Lev. 11:47), between that which is divine and that which is human. Ritual cleanness and uncleanness should not be thought of as a contrast between good and evil.

Furthermore, regulations pertaining to cleanness and uncleanness do not single out women. There are types of uncleanness specific to men, and there are types specific to women, but most apply to both sexes.

Feminists have often failed to recognize these distinctions. Biblical regulations pertaining to ceremonial cleanness do not negate a woman's religious experience; they emphasize unique fem-

inine life experiences (gender appreciation). Thus, after giving birth, a woman made a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem to bring the prescribed sacrifice and to purify herself. She did not come with a sense of guilt, but came celebrating a distinctive feminine experience. Her religious ceremony in the Temple was a celebration of femininity.

The biblical prophets (especially Ezekiel) and poets sometimes employed the terms "clean" and "unclean" as metaphors for good and evil: "And he will cast pure water on you and you will be clean" (Ezek. 36:25); "Cleanse me from my iniquity and purify me from my sin" (Ps. 51:4). Perhaps "clean" and "unclean" were already used metaphorically in the Pentateuch in the passage about unlawful sexual relations (Lev. 18). In this passage, a connection is made between detestable pagan practices and ritual impurity, and God's demand that the Israelites keep themselves undefiled by not engaging in such practices.

Joseph Frankovic adds:

It is nearly impossible in English to find a one-word equivalent that adequately expresses the sense of the biblical and rabbinic technical term *טָמֵא* (*ta-ME'*). Most one-word equivalents used to translate *ta-ME'*, such as "unclean" or "impure," carry a conspicuous negative prefix. However, the term does not convey a sense of moral judgment unless the state of impurity has been achieved by an act proscribed by Torah. The term may simply mean incompatibility with or unreadiness to enter God's sphere (e.g., the Temple sanctuary).

Perhaps a helpful way to grasp one nuance of the term's meaning is by analogy. In designing a house, one does not put the dining room next to the bathroom. The activities of the bathroom do not complement those of the dining room. Neither bathroom nor dining room activities, however, are sinful, just incompatible. Also, note carefully Saul's assumption about David's absence at the royal meal (1 Sam. 20:26). He seems to arrive at his conclusion about David with no hint of alarm or disgust.

Joseph of Arimathea (Lk. 23:53, and parallels) took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb. He became ceremonially unclean through this contact with a corpse. His ritual state was a result of his righteous behavior. If one is to take Jesus' humanity seriously, then one must assume that Jesus went through cycles of being ceremonially clean and unclean. Whether Jesus, at a given moment, was "clean" or "unclean" said nothing about his moral character. The vast majority of New Testament scholars believe that Joseph (Mary's husband) died before Jesus began his public ministry. Did

Jesus participate at his father's funeral? Did he come in contact with Joseph's corpse? If he did, then he too, through this caring deed, would have become ritually impure.

■ JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE Articles in Spanish

Recently, I became acquainted with your publication and I personally think that it is one of the finest I have seen. I am director of a Bible Institute here in Temuco and all of our instruction is in Spanish. In spite of the language difference our students will greatly benefit from your scholarship. Please find enclosed a check for a one-year subscription. We hope in the future to be able to order all the back issues also.

I would like to request permission to translate into Spanish a few of the articles in *JP* for a pastors' journal (not for profit) here in Chile. I realize that you cannot give "blanket permission," so I would like to start with the article "Jehovah"—A Christian Misunderstanding" that appeared in the November/December 1991 issue.

Thank you very much for your publication and my prayer is that God will richly bless you in your work and magnify the Name of the Lord through your ministry.

Michael Racey Wallis, Director
Instituto Teologico Bautista, Temuco, Chile

■ Prisoner Wants College Degree

The brothers here at Iowa State Penitentiary want to thank you for all of the time and effort that you put in to preparing JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. It is the most authoritative source that we have been able to come in contact with regarding the words of Jesus as presented in the Synoptic Gospels.

We have very limited study material here at the prison, although we continue to give thanks for what we do have. We have books, tapes and periodicals from a number of people who teach from a Hebraic perspective. I have Dr. Young's *Jesus and His Jewish Parables* and *The Jewish Background to the Lord's Prayer*. I have all of Dr. Lindsey's books except his three-volume synoptic concordance. I have Dr. Wilson's *Our Father Abraham*, and *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* by Prof. Flusser. Two of the brothers here have Blackman's commentary and translation of the Mishnah, and I have Danby's translation of

the Mishnah. We have the Septuagint with Apocrypha, along with Esther Rabbah and Song of Songs Rabbah. Each prisoner is allowed twenty-five books and thirty tapes.

I do not have much money to buy books. Some of this stuff is really expensive. The books that I plan on getting when I do get the money are *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* in two volumes by Charlesworth, some Dead Sea Scroll material, and *The Jewish People in the First Century*, edited by Shmuel Safrai and Menahem Stern, if I can find someone who sells it—the publisher, Augsburg Fortress, informs me that it is out of print.

Recently, one of the brothers received the Book of Ruth with commentary from Mesorah Publications. I must share with you something that I read in this commentary (p. 60), in the discussion of Ruth 1:1; "Some understand *שְׁנֵי שָׁנִים* (*she-FOT ha-shof-TIM*) as the period when 'God judged the judges' [rather than the period when 'the judges judged']—for they were the cause of the famine (Ibn Ezra; Vilna Gaon). 'It was a generation which judged its judges. If the judge said to a man, 'Take the splinter from between your teeth,' he would retort, 'Take the beam from between your eyes' (Bava Batra 15^b)." I know that this is nothing new to you, but I got goose bumps when I read it (cf. Lk. 6:41–42). Although Dr. Young mentions this saying (pp. 4, 14, note 17), I had never read it in context.

Please excuse me. I know that I am rambling, but it is just that I don't get to talk about this kind of material with very many people.

The brothers here at I.S.P. try to meet each Friday in the library for two hours, so that we can attempt to answer questions that anyone might have. We get out all of our dictionaries, lexicons and commentaries along with the material mentioned above. Other than this meeting, we generally study in our cells, exchanging books and tapes as need be.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE is very helpful in our spiritual growth, especially in the area of giving Hebrew equivalents to Greek words. It is very difficult to find material in this field, although Thayer's lexicon does help quite a bit. But when one speaks of "mishnaic Hebrew equivalents" as JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE does, well, we simply have nowhere else to turn.

My goal is to learn as much as I can about Jesus. It is very difficult to get an adequate biblical education behind these walls, but with the help of the Lord, I will be able to continue my spiritual quest.

I am presently enrolled at Ohio University (part-time status). This university offers a program by correspondence for the incarcerated to receive an A.A. degree. Tuition is \$60 per credit

(continued on page 38)

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE welcomes letters and faxes to the editor. We will use this column to share as many of our readers' comments, queries and requests as possible.

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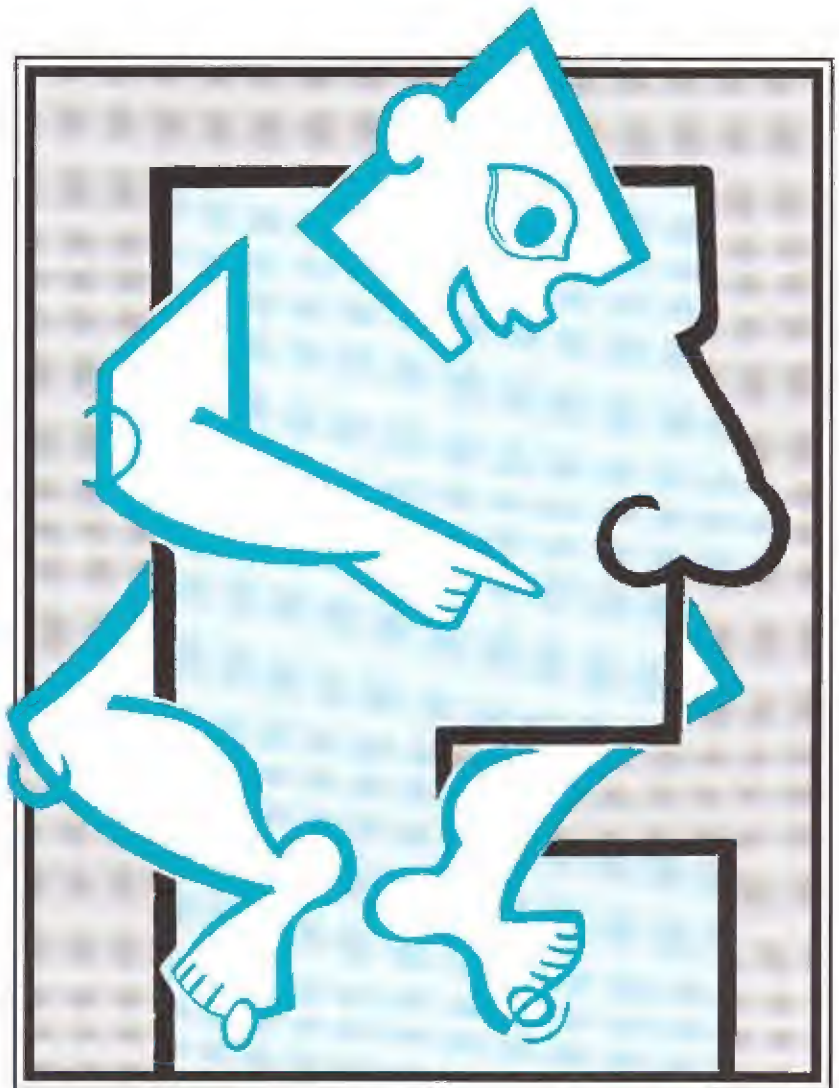
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THE POWER OF PARABLES

by Joseph Frankovic

Illustrations by Helen Twena

Jesus was a master teacher. Therefore, it is significant that he relied heavily on parables. What is it about parables that makes them so moving and memorable?



Esteeming the Parable

Parables, both rabbinic and synoptic, have roots running deep in the fertile soil of Hebrew Scripture, whence they draw imagery and ultimately their theology. In a fifth-century A.D. text written in the land of Israel, Rabbi Levi¹ tells the following parable:

To what may the sons of Israel be compared? It is like a man who has a son, whom he places on his shoulders and takes for a stroll through the market. When the son sees something desirable he says to his father, "Buy that for me!" and he buys it for him. This happens not once, but three times. Then the son sees a man and asks him, "Have you seen my father?" His father retorts, "Foolish one! You are riding on my shoulders! Everything you want I am getting for you, and you say to this man, 'Have you seen my father?'" What did his father do? He tossed the child from his shoulders, and a dog came and snapped at him.²

Rabbi Levi told this vivid story in order to explain the relationship between two verses of Scripture. In Exodus 17:7, despite having been escorted by the seven clouds of glory, given water, manna and even quail in the wilderness, the Israelites said, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"³ The next verse, Exodus 17:8, reads: "Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim."⁴ Amalek is the dog that suddenly appears and snaps at the child.

The rich and humorous imagery of this parable, especially that of the father carrying his son, was inspired by the biblical text. In the book of Deuteronomy Moses recounts to the children of Israel how God carried them in the wilderness "just as a man carries his son."⁵ This image makes a powerful theological statement. Moreover, the prophets, too, speak of God as a loving father rearing his children. Hosea, speaking on behalf of God, laments, "When Israel was a youth I loved him...it is I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them in my arms."⁶

God is also depicted as a gentle, loving father in the parables of the Synoptic Gospels. Most outstanding is Luke's parable of the Lost Son⁷ where the father dashes off to embrace the son who had spurned him. The episode brings to mind verses like Exodus 34:6, Psalms 86:5, 15, and Jonah 4:2, which speak of God's patience and readiness to forgive. Relevant is one sage's interpretation of Psalms 32:10: "Even if an evil person repents and trusts in the LORD, loving-kindness will surround him."⁸ These verses and the midrashic interpretation of

Psalms 32:10 teach that God stands ready to forgive and receive any who make a move toward repentance.⁹ This is one of the theological truths that drives the Lost Son parable.

There are also synoptic parables where God is cast as a king.¹⁰ Parables comparing God to a king abound in the Midrash.¹¹ Like the motif of God as a father, God as a king has its origins in the Torah. Indeed, God may be spoken of in terms of absolute, universal sovereignty, but the sages and especially Jesus inclined toward speaking of his reigning presence in the lives of people who had joyfully embraced him as the one true God. In other words, yielding to God and accepting the responsibilities of his kingship is tantamount to enthroning him as king. Israel did this after passing through the Red Sea when they sang, "The LORD shall reign forever and ever!"¹² The sages believed it was here that Israel first accepted the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, declared God to be king.¹³ In Deuteronomy 33:5, Moses refers to God explicitly as king. The prophets add much to the imagery of God's kingship. Interestingly, Isaiah, speaking on God's behalf, says: "I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King...who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters."¹⁴ He, too, like the sages, saw God's kingship as having been manifested in the great redemptive act at the Red Sea. In the Book of Psalms God is referred to as king in numerous places. One Psalmist proclaimed: "The LORD sits as King forever."¹⁵

The portrait of God as a caring father or exalted king has its roots in the five books of the Torah. The prophets, themselves students of the Torah, contributed to the development of those motifs. But it was left to the sages of Israel to take the foundation laid by the Torah and the timber supplied by the Prophets and Psalmists and build their parables. Nearly all parables are organic outgrowths of the biblical text's conceptual world. The imagery and motifs they employ and message they

convey emanate from that conceptual textual world. Therefore, parables are a most effective way of communicating complex theological concepts¹⁶ in a manner that both the simple and sophisticated can appreciate. As the sages say, "Let not the parable be lightly esteemed in your eyes, since by means of the parable a man can master the words of Torah"¹⁷—and perhaps the teachings of Jesus, too.



Enjoying the Art of a Parableteller

Rabbi Abba bar Yudan once told a parable in the name of Rabbi Aha:¹⁸

It is like a prince who was emotionally disturbed. Once, he grabbed a pickax in order to mutilate his father. His pedagogue said to him, "Don't trouble yourself! Give me the pickax and I will do the job!" Catching a glimpse [of what the pedagogue did], the king said to him, "I know what your intention was. You thought it better that the offense be blamed on you rather than on my son. I swear to you that you will never depart from my palace. You will eat from the abundance of my table, and collect twenty-four stipends."¹⁹

Rabbi Aha's parable is one of numerous examples where the Midrash attempts to explain Aaron's conduct in the episode of the Golden Calf.²⁰ In this case, by comparing Aaron's actions to those of a noble pedagogue who shields the king's son from blame, the parable whitewashes Aaron, despite the fact that the biblical story points to him as a leading candidate for culpability.²¹

The Noble Pedagogue is indicative of most parables, whether they be synoptic or rabbinic. The plot is off to a dashing start by the end of the first sentence: neurotic prince heads toward king with pickax in hand. The characters are familiar to the listener. He or she can formulate some idea of how a prince, pedagogue and king might respond in such a crisis. One character, however, defies expectations. Instead of fleeing the scene or defending the king, the pedagogue rushes toward the son and offers to do the gruesome deed for him—a surprising revelation for the listener. The twist in the fast-moving plot has knocked the audience off balance. But the tension is resolved as rapidly as it has been created, with the disclosure of the pedagogue's motive. Indeed, the audience breathes a

sigh of relief, probably followed by some laughter.²² The *darshan* (expositor) has succeeded brilliantly.

A rapid development of plot with a shocking or humorous twist, or both, is a standard feature of the parables of Jesus. For example, tension mounts in the parable of the Talents²³ as three servants who have been entrusted with large sums of money await the king's imminent return. The audience is distressed to learn, however, that after returning, the king punishes harshly the well-intentioned servant who buried his one talent for safekeeping.

Particularly noteworthy is the parable of the Prodigal Son,²⁴ where, after callously rejecting his father, a Jewish lad finds himself longing to eat the food of pigs.²⁵ In the end, he returns to his father, who unabashedly hikes up his robe, sprints and embraces the son who has shamed him. But there is more. The parable is about a man with two sons. What about the other son, the "good" son who remained at home? The audience learns that he, too, has failed to accept the bountiful, unconditional love of his father.

That relationship is also in need of restoration, a sobering thought when one realizes that this son's conduct is meant to address shortcomings prevalent among the community of faith.

When reading or hearing a parable of Jesus, one should be ready to gasp or chuckle. Jesus had tremendous creative genius. He recognized that humor, especially irony, is a powerful teaching tool.²⁶ Moreover, Jesus knew human nature—people love to hear a good story. Thus, it is no wonder that Jesus capitalized on the parable to capture the imagination of his audiences and communicate indispensable truths with far-reaching ethical and moral implications regarding man's relationship to his fellow and his Creator.²⁷



Grasping the Profound

In a famous parable, which is repeated several places in the Midrash²⁸ and Talmud,²⁹ the sages tackle the problem of man's dual nature. Which is more responsible for an individual's conduct, the body or the soul? How will God factor in this dual nature when he judges an individual at the resurrection of the dead? Indeed, throughout history philosophers have written treatises speculating on various aspects of the coexistence of the body and soul. But not the rabbis; they told parables.

Rabbi Ishmael³⁰ taught: "It resembles a king who had an orchard of choice early figs. He posted in it two watchmen, one of whom was lame, and the other blind. He charged them, 'Guard carefully the early figs!' Then he left them and went his way. 'I see choice early figs,' said the lame man. 'Let's eat them!' said the blind man. 'Am I able to walk?' the lame man responded. 'Am I able to see?' the blind man replied. What did they do? The lame man sat on the shoulders of the blind man, and they picked and ate the early figs. Then each went to his post. After a number of days the king came and said to them, 'Where are the early figs?' 'Can I see?' answered the blind man. 'Can I walk?' answered the lame man. What did the shrewd king do? He set the lame man on the shoulders of the blind man and judged them as one."³¹

Though certainly not exhausting the subject, the parable of the Two Watchmen is a fresh and entertaining approach to an elusive interrelationship. Here, a sage has marshaled his parabolic skills and succeeded in reducing an abstract concept to concrete images. R. Ishmael employed what is familiar and mundane to clarify what is unfamiliar and complex.

The characters are known to the audience from daily life. Kings were a standard feature in the ancient world. Watchmen, too, were commonly employed during the harvest season. No doubt some in the audience boosted their income with such seasonal employment. The plot of the parable also reflects reality. Landlords appointed watchmen over their cultivated land and departed to tend other business.³²

Using characters and plots drawn from the realities of daily life, the sages made it easy for the audience to identify with the content of a parable, which aided their comprehension of its message. The simple and tangible served as a springboard for gaining a glimpse of the profound. Education was not a prerequisite. Even the simple could listen to the para-

ble of the Two Watchmen, laugh and comprehend that, as George Foot Moore explained, "Sin, however it may be analyzed, is the sin of the *man*, not of either half of his nature."³³

Jesus also told parables with characters and plots drawn from realities of life.³⁴ Using a set of twin parables,³⁵ he compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed and leaven in order to illustrate the dynamic expansion of the redemptive movement he was leading. In another, he spoke about four types of soil into which seed fell to teach about four types of disciples.³⁶ And elsewhere he told a parable about a slave, who having had an enormous debt canceled by a king imprisoned a fellow slave who owed him a fraction of that amount, to bring into sharp focus the implications of one's unwillingness to forgive his fellow.³⁷

These images, characters and motifs were meant to enhance comprehension. Everyone listening had seen the way a little leaven caused dough to rise, or the persistent growth of a small mustard seed. Many in the audience had sown fields themselves and knew all too well that only rich, fertile soil produced high crop yields. Indeed, most of Jesus' listeners had at one time or another loaned money or incurred a debt, or both. Thus, having actually lived out certain aspects of the Unforgiving Slave's plot, they could react from personal experience to the tension generated by the man's odious conduct. Moreover, the original language of the parable, Hebrew,³⁸ greatly facilitated bridging the gap between the abstract and the tangible. Beneath the Greek ὀφειλῆτης (*opheilêtes*, debtor) of Matthew 18:24 is likely the Hebrew כִּי (ha-YAV). The Hebrew ha-YAV can mean both "indebted" and "guilty of transgression."³⁹

From the copious evidence available from comparative study of rabbinic parables, and the internal evidence of the synoptic parables themselves,⁴⁰ one arrives at the inescapable conclusion that Jesus spoke in parables not to conceal but to clarify. Jesus was an indefatigable teacher.⁴¹ He taught his audiences much about God's love, grace, forgiveness and justice, about human nature, and about the redemptive movement he was leading, which he called the Kingdom of Heaven. To communicate these profound concepts, he relied upon parables with their simple characters, familiar motifs and realistic plots. They worked. Instead of walking away bored or confused, Jesus' listeners departed smiling and enlightened.



1. Rabbi Levi flourished late in the third century A.D. He was appointed by Rabbi Yohanan as a salaried *darshan* (expositor) at the *bet midrash* in Tiberias. A master of aggadah, he excelled in telling parables. See the entry "Levi" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), 11:75.

2. Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 3:1 (ed. Mandelbaum, p. 35). See Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 84–88. See especially Young's comment on p. 88: "All in all the parable of 'The Spoiled Son' emphasizes the intimacy between the people of Israel and their Father in heaven by picturing this relationship in terms of the closeness of family ties. Thus this parable is much more than an illustration of a biblical text and may very well exemplify early rabbinic preaching which by no means should be characterized as dry, legalistic or pedantic."

3. From the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB).

4. From the NASB.

5. Deut. 1:31, from the NASB.

6. Hosea 11:1, 3, from the NASB. Cf. Jer. 3:19 and 31:9.

7. Lk. 15:11–32.

8. Leviticus Rabbah 15:4 (ed. Margulies, p. 330).

9. Cf. Song of Songs Rabbah 5:2, §2 (Midrash Rabbah, Soncino ed. 9:232): "R. Jassa said: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: "My sons, present to me an opening of repentance no bigger than the eye of a needle, and I will widen it into openings through which wagons and carriages can pass."'"

10. E.g., Mt. 18:23–35 and 22:1–14. See David Bivin, "King Parables," *Jerusalem Perspective* 45 (Jul/Aug. 1994), 14–15.

11. See the entry "Parable" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 13:74–75.

12. Exod. 15:18, from the NASB. See Brad H. Young, *The Jewish Background to the Lord's Prayer* (Dayton, OH: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1984), pp. 10–17.

13. See Leviticus Rabbah 2:4 (ed. Margulies, p. 42). See also Louis Ginzberg's helpful discussion of the kingdom of heaven in "The Religion of the Jews at the Time of Jesus," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 1 (1924), 311–314.

14. Isa. 43:15–16, from the NASB. See also Isa. 33:22, Jer. 10:10, Mic. 2:13, Zeph. 3:15 and Mal. 1:14.

15. Ps. 29:10, from the NASB.

16. See Brad H. Young's *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995) for an excellent treatment of how Jesus communicated and taught his theology. Much of it was in parables.

17. Song of Songs Rabbah 1:1, §8–9 (Midrash Rabbah, Soncino ed. 9:10).

18. The technical expression "in the name of" simply means that R. Abba bar Yudan heard the parable directly from R. Aha, or from someone else

who credited R. Aha with the parable. The sages were careful to preserve the names of earlier sages who were responsible for transmitting a tradition. R. Abba bar Yudan and R. Aha both lived in the land of Israel in the first half of the fourth century A.D.

19. Leviticus Rabbah 10:3 (ed. Margulies, pp. 201–202).

20. See Exod. 32.

21. Cf. Deut. 9:20.

22. In addition to having a shocking twist in plot, the parable makes use of humor. The pedagogue's offer to assist the son is humorous. Moreover, when one rethinks the parable knowing that the king represents God, the pedagogue, Aaron, and the emotionally disturbed son, Israel, one cannot help but chuckle at the comparisons.

23. Mt. 25:14–30. Brad Young suggests that this parable was probably told by Jesus to illustrate the importance of serving God out of love rather than fear. Fear paralyzes and prevents an individual from being an effective participant in God's redemptive movement (private communication). Cf. 1 John 4:18.

24. Lk. 15:11–32. See Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, pp. 239–241.

25. The obvious irony is that pigs are the premier example of non-kosher animals.

26. This is an important point that Elton Trueblood makes throughout his book, *The Humor of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). For Jesus' use of irony, see especially pp. 53–67.

27. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, p. 320.

28. The earliest midrashim where this parable is mentioned are Mechilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, *Beshallah* 2; to Exod. 15:1 [ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 125] and Mechilta de-Rabbi Shim'on bar Yochai to Exod. 15:1 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, pp. 76–77).

29. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 91a–b.

30. R. Ishmael ben Elisha was one of the most outstanding rabbinic figures of the tannaic period. A child when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple (70 A.D.), he was taken captive to Rome but returned to the land of Israel after being ransomed by R. Yehoshua. Though not likely, R. Ishmael may have lived to see the Bar Kochva Revolt (132–135 A.D.). His closest colleague was the great R. Akiva, with whom he disputed on matters of halachah, aggadah and methods of exegesis. See the entry "Ishmael ben Elisha" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 9:83–86.

31. Leviticus Rabbah 4:5 (ed. Margulies, p. 88–89). The motif of a blind man and a lame man collaborating has its origins in the literature of ancient India. The rabbinic form of the parable has been shaped by Hellenistic-Jewish influences. See Luitpold Wallach, "The Parable of the Blind and the Lame," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 62 (1943), 333–339. See also Young's discussion of this parable in *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, pp. 64–68.

32. The parable's plot is believable, except of

course for the hiring of two guards with physical limitations. This was probably intended to be humorous. Interestingly, the version of the parable that appears in Tanhuma, *Va-Yikra* 6 (ed. Wilna, p. 183^a) and Tanhuma, *Va-Yikra* 12 (ed. Buber, p. 4^b), gives the reason for the king's decision to employ a blind guard and a lame guard: "If I post there a watchman who can see and walk, he will eat the early fruit himself." Cf. Wallach's comments about this sentence and the Tanhuma version of the parable, *ibid.*, 337–338.

33. George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 1:486–487.

34. See Young's remarks concerning the realia that may underlie the plots of the Prodigal Son and Good Samaritan parables (*Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, pp. 239–241).

35. Mt. 13:31–33; Lk. 13:18–20. Cf. Robert L. Lindsey, "Jesus' Twin Parables," *Jerusalem Perspective* 41 (Nov/Dec. 1993), 3–6, 12.

36. Mt. 13:3–9; Mk. 4:3–9; Lk. 8:4–8. Compare the explanations of the parable of the Sower: Mt. 13:18–23; Mk. 4:13–20; Lk. 8:11–15. Matthew and Mark use the words "sower" and "sown" throughout their explanations whereas Luke focuses attention on the soil into which the seed fell. In other words, the emphasis is on the soil, which represents one of four types of disciples. (See Young's insightful treatment of the Sower in his forthcoming *The Parables of Jesus in Light of Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*.) Cf. Leviticus Rabbah 2:1 (ed. Margulies, p. 35): "It is the way of the world that one thousand individuals begin studying Bible, and a hundred of them finish. A hundred individuals begin studying Mishnah, and

ten of them finish. Ten individuals begin studying Talmud, and one of them finishes." Cf. Mishnah, Avot 5:12, 15: "There are four qualities in disciples: he who quickly understands and quickly forgets...he who understands with difficulty and forgets with difficulty...he who understands quickly and forgets with difficulty.... There are four qualities among those that sit before the wise: they are like a sponge, a funnel, a strainer, or a sieve" (Joseph Hertz, *Sayings of the Fathers with a new English Translation and a Commentary* [New York: Behrman House, 1945], pp. 95, 97).

37. Mt. 18:23–35.

38. See Young's discussion on the original language of parables (*Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, pp. 40–42).

39. Cf. the translation of this verse in Franz Delitzsch's Hebrew translation of the New Testament. See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (repr. New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1950), p. 428.

40. Cf. Robert L. Lindsey's response (pp. 148–150 in "A Panel of Commentary on Petuchowski's Discussion of the Parable," *Christian News from Israel* 23 [1973], 144–151) to Jacob Petuchowski's excellent article, "The Theological Significance of the Parable in Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament," *Christian News from Israel* 23 (1972), 76–86.

41. Even on the cross, Jesus taught a final message of hope by quoting from Psalm 22. See Hayim Goren Perelmuter, *Siblings: Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity at Their Beginnings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 14–15. JP

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Beating the (Thorny) Bushes



Article and photographs by Gloria E.M. Suess

Bushes, thistles, briars and brambles are a thorny subject for English translators and expositors of the Hebrew Bible. It seems that the Greek writers of the Gospels did not have a soft time with them either.





Flower and seed pod of the Maltese Cross.



Fruit of the Caper.

In recording Jesus' warnings about "false prophets" (probably fake disciples), Matthew contrasts *akanthai* (thorn bushes) with *staphylai* (grapes), and *triboloi* (thistles) with *syka* (figs); whereas Luke contrasts *akanthai* (thorn bushes) with *syka* (figs), and *batos* (a bramble bush) with *staphylē* (a bunch of grapes):

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? (Mt. 7:16, NKJ)

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorn bushes, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. (Lk. 6:44, NKJ)

Either the translators were unable to agree on spiny plant identification or Jesus may have referred to different plants on different occasions when using the same teaching illustration. He used a similar saying when confronted by accusers in Matthew 12:24–37; see verse 33.

No doubt Jesus used such illustrations many times. In the Hebrew Scriptures, plants and their fruit are referred to as illustrations too often to be listed. Joel 2:22 is one of many passages that include both figs and grapes: "...and the tree bears its fruit: the fig tree and the vine yield their strength" (NKJ). Similar proverbs are found in rabbinic literature and the Apocrypha. For examples: "The fruit of the righteous man is his good conduct" (Genesis Rabbah 16:3); and "The fruit of a tree declares the husbandry thereof, so is the utterance of the thought of a

man's heart" (Ben Sira 27:6).

As to the identification of the exact fruit referred to by Jesus, there is little doubt that *staphylai* are grapes (סְטַפְלַי, *ʿa-na-VIM*) and *syka* are figs (סִיכָא, *te-e-NIM*). But the other species are a thorny problem. The Hebrew Scriptures have as many as twenty Hebrew words to indicate spiny plants, and these are inconsistently translated into English by general terms such as thistle, thorn, briars, brambles and nettles. The sages of the Mishnah were not able to agree on specific identification either, and challenged each other's renditions.

The Greek words *akantha* (singular of *akanthai*) and *tribolos* (singular of *triboloi*) have been used in modern botanic terms. The *Acanthus* family member prevalent in Israel is *Acanthus syriacus*, **Syrian Acanthus**. Its Hebrew name is קֶצֶץ סִירִי (ko-TSITS su-RI). This two-foot spike of stiff purple bracts with small white flowers rises from a rosette of spiny leaves. These leaves were the models for decorative stonework in Bible times. The fruit is a small, hard seed, not considered a food source. *Tribulus terrestris* grows throughout Mediterranean lands and is known in Israel as קֶצֶץ מִצְרַיִם (KO-tev ma-TSUI). This long-stemmed plant creeps as a weed in fallow fields. Its common name, **Maltese Cross**, comes from the five-starred, wickedly spiny seeds.

Neither plant seems suitable for comparison to figs and grapes. First, they do not bear edible fruit and therefore would not be known by their

Right:
Caper in bloom.

Page 16 top:
Fruit of the fig tree.

Page 16 bottom:
Syrian Acanthus.

Page 17:
Fruit of the grape vine.



fruit. The point of the teaching is identification by the fruit of the plant, not impossibility of it to bear either figs or grapes. Second, in Mishnaic opinion, the Syrian Acanthus and the Maltese Cross fall in the category of "vegetables"—plants whose leaves begin from the underground root. In Mishnaic usage, a plant that puts out its leaves from woody, above-ground stock is a "tree" (עץ, *ets*). In the Hebrew Scriptures even shrubs such as hyssop, as well as mighty cedars, were considered trees (see 1 Kings 4:33). As both the fig tree and the grape vine are in the category of *ets*, probably Jesus was comparing them to plants also in that category.

For the same two reasons, "thistles" seems out of place in the translation of Matthew 7:16. The subject of thistles in the Gospels will be considered in a future issue.

Among the more than seventy known species of thorny plants growing in Israel, candidates in this article have been selected by the following criteria: 1) has a woody stock; 2) bears edible but unfavorable fruit; and 3) was as well known as the grape and fig.

Caper, *Capparis spinosa*, קצף קטן (*tza-LAF ko-tsa-NI*), is a low, somewhat straggling bush that grows in rocky places throughout Israel and seems to like stone wall crevices in particular. Its long woody branches are studded with small thorns that hook inward, so that one may easily insert a hand to pluck the fruit but with difficulty withdraw it. The caper puts forth large, showy white flowers with many long dark pink stamens. Both the green pendulous fruit and

the young buds are pickled and eaten as a relish. In Second Temple times the fruit of the cultivated caper was tithed as agricultural produce (Mishnah, Ma'asrot 4:6).

Common Hawthorn, *Crataegus aronia*, קוצן קטן (*uz-RAR ko-tsa-NI*), is an attractive, small tree of the rose family and enjoys hilly, wooded areas such as Galilee, Golan and the Judean hills. The thorny branches brighten with fragrant white flowers during April and May. These mature as round, red-orange fruits about one-half inch in diameter, resembling very small crab apples. The fruit is edible and has a pleasant acidic taste. This hawthorn was a common wild tree in ancient Israel, and its fruit was considered marketable, edible produce in the Talmudic period (Mishnah, Demai 1:1).

Holy Raspberry, *Rubus sanctus*, סנה קטן (*PE-tel ka-DOSH*), is a wild raspberry that grows in thickets near water. Its tall branches bear needle-sharp thorns that, like the caper's, hook inward. The blossoms, grouped at the end of the branches, resemble tiny pink wild roses. The fruit, which matures in mid-summer to red-black berries, is sweet and juicy but small and seedy. There is a teaching about the wild raspberry bramble in Exodus Rabbah 2:5: "As this *sneh* that produces thorns and produces roses...so are the people of Israel, who include both righteous and wicked." *Sneh* (סנה, bush, bramble) is the Hebrew word used for the burning bush in Exodus 3:2-4, and in Jewish tradition the Holy Raspberry was thought to be this bush. In Luke 20:37 the burning bush is translated by



GLORIA E. M. SUESS

Fruit of the Common Hawthorn.



Common Hawthorn.



Blossoms of the Common Hawthorn.

the Greek word *batos*—an interesting connection with the “bramble bush” of Luke 6:44 and the *sneh* of the Jewish sages.

Christ Thorn, *Zizyphus spina-christi*, שִׁינֵף קִצְיֹף (*she-ZAF ma-TSUI*, common plum),

grows to be a large, spreading tree with thorny branches. The Latin name comes from the tradition that its branches formed the crown of thorns placed on the head of Jesus before his crucifixion. However, it is not normally found in the

Judean hills, preferring a semi-tropical climate such as in the coastal plains and the Jezreel and Arava valleys. This common (i.e., wild) plum is thought to be the תָּדֹשׁ (*ta-TAD*) of the Hebrew Scriptures, which is translated “bramble” (*NKJ*) and included with the fig and grape in the parable of the king of the trees in Judges 9:8–15. The fruit, called רִימֹן (*ri-MIN*),



Right:
Holy Raspberry.

Below:
Raspberry blossoms.



looks like tiny apples and is eaten usually when green and sour. Upon ripening, it turns yellow-orange and becomes starchy. In Talmudic times *ri-MIN* was listed as marketable, edible produce (Mishnah, Demai 1:1).

All of the above "trees" bear fruit of a sort, but they cannot compete with the deliciously sweet and juicy fruit of the fig and grape. However, the point being made in Matthew 7:16 and Luke 6:44 is not necessarily a matter of the quality, but of identification. To find an apple tree, look for apples on it; to find an honest person, look for honesty in his or her life. None of the fruit of these trees

is poisonous or rotten, as implied in Matthew 7:17-18 where Jesus goes on to compare quality of fruit with the quality of the tree itself, and thus the works of a man with the condition of his heart (Lk. 6:45).

JP



Left:
Christ Thorn tree.

Below:
Fruit of the Christ Thorn.



Why

The appeal of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research lies in the potential of its research methodologies to make the words and claims of Jesus clearer.

I Am a

Member

of the

Jerusalem

School

by Halvor Ronning

Methodology of Synoptic Relationships

I am a member of the Jerusalem School because of its approach to the synoptic problem. What first caught my attention was that Dr. Robert Lindsey, the original inspiration of the Jerusalem School, had no specific interest in theories about the Synoptic Gospels; he arrived at his theory totally as a by-product of another concern. He had no personal interest either to defend or to challenge the reigning theory of Markan priority. He was simply a Baptist pastor with a pastor's heart toward his congregation. He had been taught Markan priority in seminary and he accepted Markan priority. But his mind was changed because of his work in New Testament translation.

What decades later became known as the "Jerusalem School" began with the translation work of Lindsey in the 1950s. As pastor of a congregation in Jerusalem, he hoped to provide a more helpful translation of the New Testament than the 100-year-old Delitzsch translation used at that time by most of the Hebrew-speaking Christians in the State of Israel.

Believing in the priority of Mark, he began by translating the Gospel of Mark into Hebrew. However, the irregularities of the Greek language in the Gospel of Mark puzzled him; sometimes Mark's wording was smooth Koine Greek and sometimes it was Hebraic Greek. He then compared the Markan version of any given Gospel story to the same event in Luke and Matthew. These comparisons revealed an amazing consistency of Hebrew idiom in the Lukan parallels, but not in the Matthean parallels; the latter closely resembled Mark. These early observations eventually led him to the theory of the existence of an early Hebrew biography of Jesus and the priority of Luke.

Lindsey noted that Hebraic idiom is most consistently preserved in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. However, Matthew loses his usual consistency of Hebrew idiom and becomes erratic in this respect in parallels to Mark; Matthew's consistency or lack of it are in direct relationship to the absence or presence of Markan parallels. This does not happen to the consistency of Hebrew idiom in Luke; Luke is uninfluenced by Markan parallels.

The basic insight that guides the research of the Jerusalem School is the assumption that there existed a Hebrew *Life of Jesus* before our present Gospels. It is this insight that has led to our "working hypothesis"—that the order in which the Synoptic Gospels were written is Luke, Mark, Matthew.

In 1962, when I first arrived in Jerusalem, this was for me nothing but an interesting theory. Over the years I have had innumerable opportunities to see how helpful this theory is. I have come to trust its reliability from my own observations.

Methodology with Texts

I am a member of the Jerusalem School because I believe in the importance of proper methodology when studying ancient texts:

1. No text will be fully understandable unless one knows the original language in which it was composed. This is why the work of the Jerusalem School is built on research conducted with a knowledge of the local Hebrew and Aramaic languages of that time—as well as Greek, the international lingua franca.

2. No text will be fully understandable unless one knows the historical context of the writing in terms of the thought world of the writer and his audience. This is why the Jerusalem School aims to know the Jewish world in which Jesus and his followers lived, so as to determine where the New Testament message is agreeing, disagreeing or innovating in relationship to that world. The ideal New Testament scholar must be a scholar of Jesus' Bible, the Old Testament, and a scholar of Jesus' day, the late Second Temple period.

3. No text will be fully understandable unless one knows the norms of writing of the period in which the text was written. Therefore, the Jerusalem School aims to see the writing styles of the various Gospel writers in relationship to other writing styles of the time. This protects against modern psychologizing in an attempt to explain intersynoptic dependencies. Instead of creative guesswork, the researcher must search for concrete historical precedents for how Jewish writ-

Halvor Ronning (B.A., St. Olaf Lutheran College; B.D., Lutheran Theological Seminary; M.A., Yale University) is completing his Ph.D. at the Hebrew University under the direction of Prof. David Flusser. A founding member and past director of the Jerusalem School, Ronning has lived in Israel for twenty-nine years.



ers of that time copied, expanded or abbreviated texts in their retelling of both the traditions they received and the events they experienced.

In summary, a consistent philological methodology is required, one that is consistent with Jesus' time in terms of language, thought patterns and literary styles.

Methodology of Cooperation

I also enjoy being a member of the Jerusalem School because of the expertise and love for careful scholarship contributed by our Jewish colleagues. Many Jewish scholars are

greatly interested in the realia of Jewish life in the Second Temple period (sixth century B.C.–first century A.D.). They are particularly interested in the late Second Temple period when Jesus lived because that is also the period of the origins of orthodox rabbinic Judaism. Some of them are ready to study all the historical records of that time, including the New Testament.

Our Colleagues

David Flusser was born in Vienna in 1917 and immigrated to Israel as a young scholar. He

Professor David Flusser (left) and Professor Shmuel Safrai.



DAVID HARRIS

had been a professor of classical Greek philology at the University of Vienna and he wanted to study everything ever written in ancient Greek by Jewish authors. This meant that his interest included the Greek New Testament. Since 1962 he has been professor of Early Christianity and Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (vol. 16, p. 1325) states:

Flusser's researches have been devoted to Christianity, with a special interest in the New Testament; to Judaism of the Second Temple Period, and in particular to the Dead Sea Scrolls.... Of great prominence have been his researches into the Dead Sea Scrolls and the sect which produced them, especially as the Scrolls relate to the New Testament. His article, "The Dead Sea Sect and Pre-Pauline Christianity" (*Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 1958), is central to any consideration of these problems. He has published numerous articles [over 1000! - Ed.] in Hebrew, German, and other languages, distinguished by a great sensitivity to currents and types of religious thought as well as by their philological analyses.

Flusser is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He was awarded the Israel Prize in 1980 by the State of Israel. His publications include *Jesus* (German edition, 1968; English edition, 1970) and *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988).

Shmuel Safrai, one of the senior members of the Jerusalem School, is professor of Jewish History of the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period at the Hebrew University. He wants to understand the historical context of Jewish life in the time period when rabbinic literature was being composed. This means that he studies all the evidence of that period, including the New Testament. Safrai was born in Warsaw in 1919, and at the age of three immigrated to Palestine with his family. He was ordained as a rabbi at the age of twenty at the prestigious Mercaz Harav Yeshivah in Jerusalem, and later received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the Hebrew University in the fields of Jewish History, Talmud and Bible. He has written twelve books and over eighty articles, and has received many literary prizes for his research, including the 1986 Jerusalem Prize. His publications include *Pilgrimage in the Period of the Second Temple* (1965, in Hebrew), *Rabbi Akiba ben Yosef: His Life and Teachings* (1970, in Hebrew), *The Jewish People in the First Century*, co-editor (2 vols., 1976), and *The Literature of the Sages, Part I*, editor (1987).

Chana Safrai, an orthodox Jewish *sabra*,

is interested in the status of women in the Second Temple period, so she studies the Jewish historical sources, including the New Testament. However, as a gifted teacher in both Jewish and Christian circles her interest goes deeper—into those creative, formative days of rabbinic Judaism. Past director of the Jerusalem School, Safrai is currently the Docent of Talmudica at the Catholic Theological University in Utrecht, Holland. She is also a member of that University's Jewish-Christian Relations Research Center. She received her B.A. and M.A. from the Hebrew University in Jewish and Hellenistic History and the History of Jewish Thought, and her Ph.D. from the Catholic Theological University. She has written *The Midrash of Philo*, co-author with Samuel Belkin (1989). Her doctoral dissertation, "Women and Temple," will soon be published in book form by Walter de Gruyter under the same title.



Professor Chana Safrai.

Jewish Reasons for Interest in the Gospels

New Testament events bear witness to the spiritual struggles of the Jewish people in the Second Temple period, especially during the days of terrible oppression by the pagan Romans. This period is as significant for the formation of rabbinic Judaism as it is for the formation of the messianic Judaism that developed into Christianity. In the Jerusalem School both Christians and Jews are looking back together to the period of their origins.

Jewish participation is particularly profitable in the scholarly pursuit of the realia of the situation. The concrete particulars of life at that time are reflected in the whole variety of Jewish literature. Just as some of us Christians are waking up to the wealth of valuable information available in non-biblical Jewish documents from Jesus' day, so likewise some

Jewish scholars utilize the valuable information contained in the New Testament.

How did people live out their daily life? What were their religious practices? How did they talk and write about these practices? What languages did they speak and write? What idioms and turns of phrase did they use, and what did they mean by them?

What did Jesus mean when he spoke to his Jewish people then? "What did Jesus say in Hebrew?" that is, what was the Jewish thought world in which Jesus and his audience were living? What realities of Jewish community life are reflected in the New Testament? What were the student-teacher relationships? What were Jews thinking about, debating over, aspiring for? What were the issues in that world of Roman oppression and Jewish longing for deliverance through a messiah? What were people suffering and hoping? These are the questions we ask in order to understand

the New Testament better.

Conclusion

The work of the Jerusalem School is largely a linguistic and philological task—as is evident from the above questions. We are devoted to getting a clearer understanding of the words of Jesus.

We do not agree with each other about how to interpret the theological significance of our findings. Three of our members are orthodox Jews, and the rest of us are personal believers in Jesus. But all of us are agreed on the importance of reliable research methodology aimed at obtaining trustworthy historical evidence for the meaning of Jesus' words.

Postscript

There is a fourth reason that I am a mem-



Professor Brad H. Young.

Jesus the Jewish Theologian

New Testament professor and Jerusalem School member Dr. Brad H. Young is eyeing the future. His *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* is rolling off the presses of Hendrickson Publishers in Peabody, Massachusetts.

As the title suggests, Young's new book fixes Jesus firmly within the context of first-century Judaism. Pursuing the evidence wherever it may lead, Young makes no apologies

ber of the Jerusalem School. It relates to **methodology in theology**. I am a member of the Jerusalem School because we Christians need to recover balance in our New Testament theology. We have studied the Greek world. We need to study the Jewish world.

Since the oldest copies of the New Testament are in Greek, theological scholarship has studied the Greek world and its pagan philosophies and values. This has been important in the effort to understand the target audience of the Gospel. However, now is the time to create a balance that has been lacking in our century. Alongside the concentration on the study of the Greek-speaking audience, we need a new concentration on the study of the sources. The origin of the sources is not in the pagan world, but in the Jewish world of the people of the Bible.

It has been amazing to us, trained as we were in Greek ways, to discover the Jewish

world of Jesus. It is disturbing to realize that we could have drifted so far away from this world. Understanding the Jewish background to the life and words of Jesus helps us focus on what is genuinely new and revolutionary about Jesus, to focus on what is significantly crucial to his identity.

To us Christians, both the divine and human sides of Jesus have become clearer. Using Jewish terminology, Jesus shocked his audience: "He who does *my* words," "Take *my* yoke," "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," etc. Such statements manifest the bankruptcy of "humanistic Christianity," which pretends that Jesus never claimed to be divine.

Focusing on Jesus' Jewish heritage is what restores balance to New Testament theology. The clearer our perception of the biblical and early rabbinic Jewish heritage of Jesus, the brighter our theological clarity about his identity becomes.

JP

for Jesus' Jewishness and boldly deals with its implications for understanding Jesus' teachings.* Three hundred and twenty pages in length, the book has two forewords, one by Professor Marvin Wilson, the other by Rabbi David Wolpe.

Even more significant is Young's forthcoming *The Parables of Jesus in Light of Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*. Nearing the final stages of completion, this manuscript is a major scholarly achievement that may set the standard for New Testament parabolic research. Building upon the pioneering work of his mentor, Professor David Flusser, Young thoroughly examines Jesus' parables against the backdrop of Second Temple-period Jewish literature, the literature of the rabbis, and even Greco-Roman parallels. The result is a fresh, highly illuminating look at Jesus' parables and the message they carry.

In addition to writing books and articles, Young is a full-time professor at Oral Roberts University, where he has taught for seven years. During this time, Young has had a profound impact on the students and

curriculum of the University's seminary. In fact, with the active support of the seminary's dean, Dr. Paul Chappell, Young is laying the foundations for a doctoral program in Early Christianity and Judaic Studies. This program holds untold potential for bringing about a long and much needed corrective in Christian preaching, teaching and thinking regarding Christianity's perception of the Jewish people and their faith. Moreover, such a program would contribute significantly to producing a new generation of Christians scholars with the necessary skills to pursue in-depth comparative studies involving the Synoptic Gospels and other ancient sources that stem from Judaism of the late Second Temple period.

*See also Young's article, "Save the Adulteress!" *Ancient Jewish Responsa in the Gospels?* *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995).

For further information about Dr. Young's work, write to: Dr. Brad H. Young, Gospel Research Foundation, P.O. Box 35234, Tulsa, OK 74153, U.S.A.

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Affiliates of the Jerusalem School

The Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliates are: **Bridges for Peace**, P.O. Box 33145, Tulsa, OK 74153 (Tel. 918-663-1998; Fax 918-663-4843); **Center for Judaic-Christian Studies**, P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429 (Tel. 513-434-4550; Fax 513-439-0230); **Centre for the Study of Biblical Research**, P.O. Box 2050, Redlands, CA 92373 (Tel. 909-793-4669; Fax 909-793-1071); and **HaKeshet**, 9939 S. 71st East Ave., Tulsa, OK 74133 (Tel. 918-298-2515; Fax 918-298-8816).

The Jerusalem School's U.K. affiliate is: **CFI Communications**, 15 Teddington Business Park, Station Road, Teddington, Middx., TW11 9BQ (Tel. 081-943-0363; Fax 081-943-3767).

■ Bridges for Peace

Bridges for Peace, directed by Clarence Wagner, is an evangelical, Christian organization headquartered in Jerusalem. Bridges for Peace was established by the late Dr. G. Douglas Young to facilitate Christian-Jewish understanding while encouraging greater support for the land and peoples of Israel. International in scope, with representatives in many countries, the organization publishes the widely circulated bimonthly, *Dispatch from Jerusalem*.

Bridges for Peace runs the only food bank in Israel. The bank distributes over one ton of food to Israel's new immigrants and needy each day, along with kitchen supplies, blankets and school kits to immigrant families. Over 10,000 immigrant families have already been helped.

■ Center for Judaic-Christian Studies

The Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, directed by Dwight Pryor, is a nonprofit organization that seeks to cultivate among Christians an appreciation of their Hebrew heritage. A founding member of the Jerusalem School, Dwight believes that to explore and understand the Jewish roots of the Christian faith is to expand and enrich

the Christian experience. This premise is at the heart of the educational endeavors of the Center.

The Center has produced a 13-part television series, *The Quest: The Jewish Jesus*; published books, such as the award-winning *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (Mazar, Doubleday), and the best-selling *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Wilson, Eerdmans); sponsored scholarly research in Israel; and conducted national conferences, seminars and lectures in churches of all denominations.

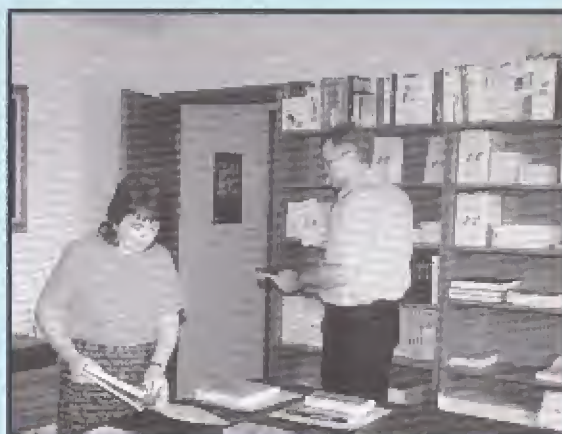
■ HaKeshet

HaKeshet (Hebrew for "the Connection") is directed by Ken and Lenore Mullican. Ken is a microbiology supervisor. Lenore, the daughter of Dr. Robert Lindsey, is faculty member at Oral Roberts University. She grew up in Israel and is fluent in Hebrew.

HaKeshet's principal objectives are to foster awareness of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, promote teaching of the Hebrew language and culture in the local church as an aid to in-depth Bible study, and serve as a clearinghouse of information for people and organizations interested in a Hebraic perspective. HaKeshet devotes much of its efforts to disseminating the writings, lectures and sermons of Robert Lindsey. For example, it is possible to obtain from HaKeshet cassette tapes of sermons Robert Lindsey preached in Jerusalem in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

■ Centre for the Study of Biblical Research

The Centre for the Study of Biblical Research (C.S.B.R.), directed by Dr.



Ken and Lenore Mullican busy in the offices of HaKeshet.

William Bean, was founded in 1984 to augment the work of the Jerusalem School. C.S.B.R.'s initial focus was to generate funds to purchase computer equipment for the School. (For the first years of the School's existence, C.S.B.R. was the School's only source of financial support.) C.S.B.R. now publishes *Fluent Biblical and Modern Hebrew*, a home-study Hebrew course, and acts as JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE's U.S. subscription office. C.S.B.R. organizes conferences and seminars, and recently has established several Synoptic Gospel Study Groups that meet monthly in the southern California area. Dr. Bean's new book, *New Treasures: A Perspective of New Testament Teachings Through Hebraic Eyes*, was just published by Cornerstone Press.

■ CFI Communications

CFI Communications, directed by Derek White, is the U.K. office of Christian Friends of Israel. CFI's main objectives are to express friendship and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people; impart to Christians an understanding of their Jewish roots and of modern Israel; counter anti-Judaism embedded in Christian preaching, teaching and thinking; and stimulate Christians to pray for Israel. CFI directs much of its efforts toward education, publishing a bimonthly newsletter and monthly digest of current events in and around Israel, and producing videos and cassette tapes. CFI has also developed a wide range of practical assistance projects in Israel.

by Ronny Reich

**In 1969, large stone
containers were
unearthed in the Jewish
Quarter excavations in
Jerusalem's Old City.**

**"What were these
vessels used for?" the
archaeologists asked.
The Gospel of John
provided the answer.**

In December 1969 we started to dig in Area B of the Jewish Quarter excavations. The late Professor Nahman Avigad directed the excavations, and Ami Mazar, now Professor of Archaeology at the Hebrew University, was Area Supervisor. When Ami was called up for reserve army duty, I replaced him.

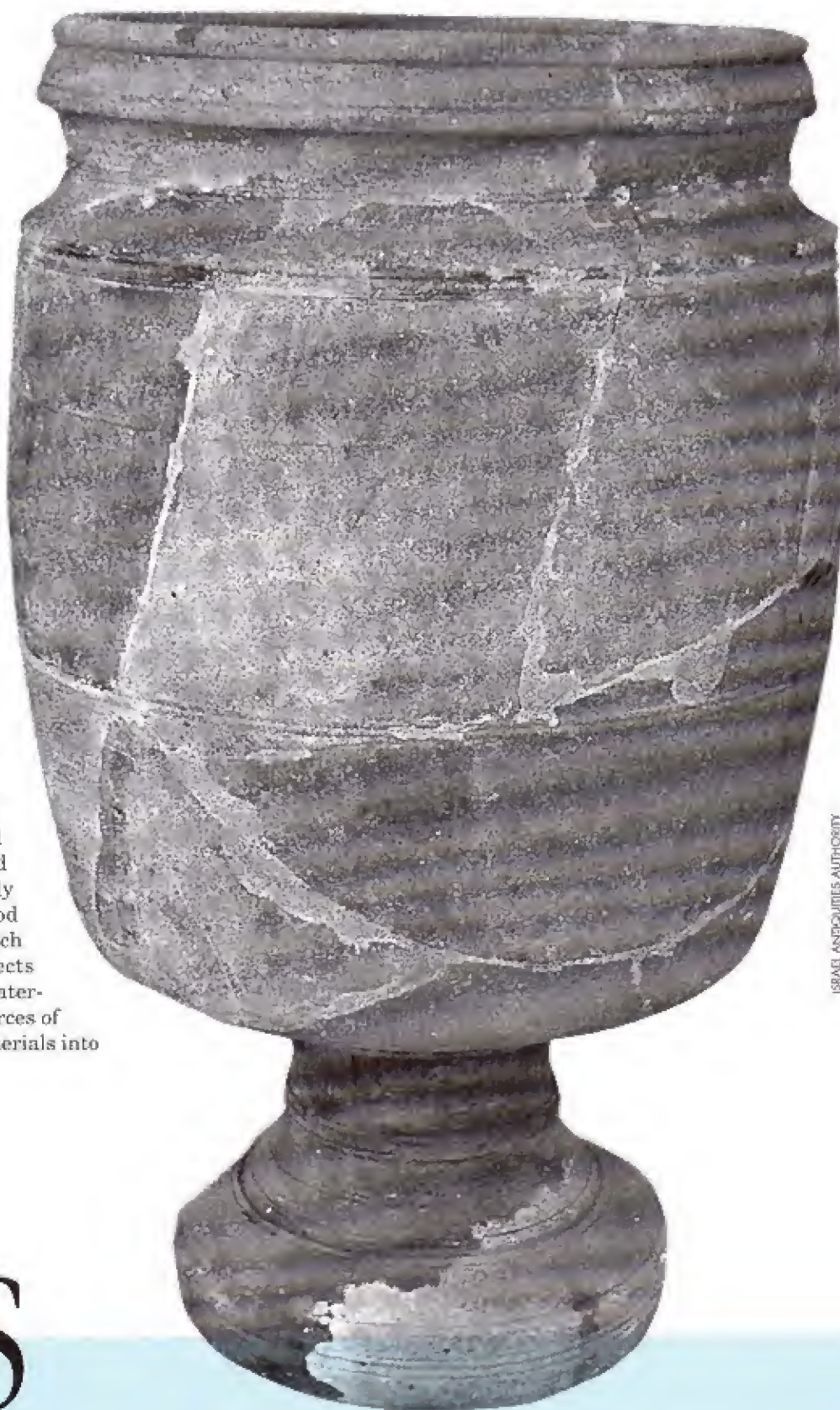
As the work advanced, we discovered that the building in Area B was destroyed in a violent fire. We soon named this building the "Burnt House." The fire had caused the building's walls to collapse, trapping under them everything that had been in the house. From the pottery vessels and coins found in the building (the latest of the coins were minted in the fourth year of the Jewish revolt against Rome, 69 C.E.), we concluded that the building, along with the entire city of Jerusalem, was destroyed in the year 70 C.E.

We were surprised to find in the "Burnt House" many stone objects—stone tables (rectangular tables, resting on a single leg, and round tables, supported by three legs), stone containers, stoppers, trays, lids, sundials, mortars and pestles, and other objects that served purposes we still cannot determine. All of these objects were found in pieces, smashed by the falling walls. Everything was photographed and recorded as found and then moved to the laboratories of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Several years were spent in the restoration of these vessels—assembling, fitting and gluing together the broken pieces.

Stone Water

Excavation of other private houses in the "Upper City" of Second Temple-period Jerusalem, and buildings in the area near the western and southern walls of the Temple Mount, as well as at sites such as Masada, Herodium, Jericho, Gamla and Jotapata in Galilee, have demonstrated that stone vessels were common in the Second Temple period (especially during the first century B.C.E. and first century C.E.). Furthermore, stone vessels were more abundant in the land of Israel in this period than in any other period of its history.

The abundance of stone vessels is probably due to Jewish religious regulations relating to ritual purity that were developed in the Second Temple period. These regulations pertain mainly to the Temple and Temple Mount area and the various activities that occurred there such as sacrifices and priestly offerings. The sages of this period classified the materials from which vessels and other household objects were made on the basis of each material's susceptibility to different sources of impurity. We may divide these materials into



ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

Jars



ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

Above:
A special exhibit at the Israel Museum featured the beautiful mosaics and exquisite stoneware found in the Jewish Quarter excavations. Note the huge goblet-like stone jars for household water storage.

Page 31:
The first of the giant stone water storage jars to be discovered. The pieces of this jar were dug up in the 1930s in Jerusalem's Old City by R. W. Hamilton, director of the mandatory Palestine Department of Antiquities. Until the "Burnt House" excavations in 1969, only one other jar of this type had come to light.

three general categories:

1. Materials that are susceptible to impurity (for example, by being touched by a person with an infectious skin disease). Objects made of such materials have to be purified by immersion in a *mikveh* (ritual immersion pool). Most materials (wood, metal, textiles, leather and others) belong to this category.

2. Materials that cannot be purified once they are made impure. This category refers mainly to pottery, as the sages had to take into account the biblical regulation, "A clay pot that the man touches must be broken" (Lev. 15:12). The sages ruled that if a source of impurity touches the inside of a vessel made of pottery, it cannot be purified, and therefore must be broken or perforated so that it can never again be used as a container. At a later stage, glass was also added to this category. The vessels mentioned in Jesus' statement in Luke 11:39 (= Mt. 23:25), "You Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of extortion and wickedness," are no doubt pot-

tery vessels and belong to this category.

3. Materials that by definition cannot be defiled by any sort of impurity. Among these materials is stone. A stone object or vessel is always exempt from this problem (cf. Mishnah, Ohot 5:5).

The immunity of stone to defilement is surely the reason for the abundance of stone vessels in this period. It was preferable to pay more for stone vessels and be on the safe side than use less-expensive pottery vessels that were always in danger of becoming defiled and having to be discarded.

One fascinating type of stone object discovered in the "Burnt House" was a container shaped like a giant goblet or chalice. The vessel rests on a narrow foot with a flat base. This is the largest type of container excavated by us (about 70 cm. high on the average and requiring two men to move when empty) and several of them were found.

This vessel is made of a single block of the local chalk—a particularly soft limestone. To

produce such a vessel, a craftsman would soak a large block of stone with water to make the stone even softer, set it on a rotating wheel, and then, with the stone rotating, use a sharp implement fastened to a side stand to carve the vessel's profile. Afterwards, the inner part of the container was hollowed out by hand.

What purpose did these large vessels serve? Because of their size it is certain that these vessels were not used as tableware like the stone cups, plates and trays that were unearthed. The answer is found in the Gospel of John in the story of a wedding celebration at Cana in Galilee. John 2:6 says, "There stood there [at the place where the wedding celebration was held] six stone water jars, each holding from two to three *metretes* [twenty to thirty gallons]." The Gospel of John is apparently the only ancient source that mentions such vessels.

The verse in John points to the fact that water was stored in houses in stone vessels.

In the first century, when one needed water, one could always go to the cistern and draw water; however, it seems that as a matter of convenience water was drawn in quantity and stored inside the house in large stone containers. Pottery jars could also have been used as waterpots, but such jars were constantly in danger of becoming ritually impure. Any such defilement meant the loss of the jar and its water.

It might be noted that all the giant goblet-like stone jars have shallow recesses on the upper side of their rims, an indication that they were covered by a lid. These lids were probably made of wood since no correspondingly large stone lids were found with the stone jars.

The discovery of stone jars in the "Burnt House" illustrates how an historical record can clarify an archaeological puzzle. Sometimes the service is extended in the other direction—an archaeological find often dramatically illustrates an ancient text.

Examples of the many pieces of stoneware excavators discovered in the Burnt House.

JP



ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY

Sea of Galilee Museum Opens Its Doors

A unique museum now awaits the visitor to Israel—*Beit Ha-Oganim* (House of the Anchors). Located at Kibbutz Ein Gev on the Sea of Galilee's eastern shore, the new museum's exhibits are a delight to the eye and a learning experience par excellence.



JANET FRANKOVIC

Kibbutz Ein Gev member Mendel Nun has devoted most of his adult life to studying ancient fishing on the Sea of Galilee, and is the foremost authority on this subject. With the museum's opening, Nun has realized his dream of establishing a museum that not only would house his collection of antiquities, but also instill in others his love for the Sea of Galilee and its history.

Nun arrived at Ein Gev before the State of Israel was founded, and has been collecting stone anchors, net weights and other ancient artifacts for decades along the shores of the Lake. His knowledge of local topography and ancient sites is profound, and he has located several ancient ports around the Lake that operated in the time of Jesus.

Nun has written extensively about the Sea of Galilee, its ancient harbors, water levels and fishing techniques. His 1964 book, *Ancient Jewish Fisheries* (in Hebrew), won the prestigious Ben-Zvi Prize. Nun's understanding of ancient fishing techniques is not solely academic. He himself worked a number of years as a fisherman at Ein Gev before the introduction of modern, commercial fishing techniques on the Lake. The fishing methods that Nun learned as a young man had not changed much from those

that Peter, James and John once used.

Besides housing Nun's unsurpassed collection of antiquities, the museum has just acquired a replica of the famous "Jesus Boat" discovered in 1986 near the ancient site of Magdala. The replica was made in Egypt by craftsmen using traditional construction techniques and is now on display at the museum.

The new museum is a tremendous resource for Christians. Nun's explanations and demonstrations of setting or casting various types of fishing nets bring to life the Gospel accounts of Jesus' call of his first disciples. The Jesus Boat replica is a stimulating visual aid that helps one appreciate the profession of these first disciples. Moreover, Ein Gev has a wonderful lakeside fish restaurant where the hungry, modern-day disciple can enjoy a plate of St. Peter's fish and a breathtaking view.

What does the future hold for the Sea of Galilee Museum? Ein Gev is located a short distance to the south of the ancient city and port of Gergesa, site of the Gergesene demoniac's healing (Lk. 8:26ff.). If interest in the museum grows, Ein Gev, capitalizing on its location, may build an educational tourist center that would include a reconstructed first-century fishing village, complete with people in authen-

Opposite:

Mendel Nun points to a drawing on the exterior of the new museum. The drawing (of a boat's prow) was made from a bas-relief found in a twenty-ninth century B.C. Egyptian tomb. Note the stone anchor near the fisherman on the boat's deck. Nun is standing next to a huge anchor-shaped cult stone. Hanging above it is a normal-sized anchor.

Below:

The facade of Beit Ha-Oganim (House of the Anchors) at Kibbutz Ein Gev.



JANET FRANKOVIC



JANET FRANKOVIC

Above:
Exhibited in the museum's display cases—linen netting, netting needles, ring-shaped lead net sinkers (above needles), and stone net weights and sinkers of various sizes and shapes.

Right:
Kibbutz Ein Gev is located on the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee, opposite the city of Tiberias.

Far right:
Drawing of a mosaic from a sixth-century A.D. church in Transjordan (reproduced on the museum's exterior wall).
(Courtesy of Mendel Nani)



tic dress, fish tanks displaying indigenous aquatic life, and fishermen drying and mending their nets. Every visitor to the center would have an opportunity to throw a real cast-net and catch a St. Peter's fish.

Even at this initial stage of the museum's development, a visit to the Sea of Galilee Museum is a necessary part of every tourist's itinerary. Nun and assistant curator, Yoel Ben-Yosef, love to show the exhibits to visitors and answer questions. Nun's passion for the Sea of Galilee, its fishermen and sailors, their nets and boats, is infectious. The Lake has captured Nun's heart, and no one, after meeting him, ever looks upon it in the same way. **JP**

For information about museum visits, write or phone: Mendel Nun, Beit Ha-Oganim, 14940 Kibbutz Ein Gev, Israel (Tel. 972-6-758998).



Left:
Reproduced on the museum's exterior wall is a coin minted in 109 A.D. by the city of Tiberias (on the Sea of Galilee's western shore). Not surprisingly, the anchor was one of the city's symbols.

Below:
Museum exhibits introduce the Sea of Galilee's fish and the ancient fishing techniques used to catch them.



MENDEL NUN

The Jerusalem School: A Unique Collaboration

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars who are examining the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) within the context of the language and culture in which Jesus lived. Their work confirms that Jesus, like other Jewish sages, taught in Hebrew and used uniquely rabbinic teaching methods.

The Jerusalem School scholars believe Jesus' words were first transmitted in Hebrew, and that these words can be recovered from the Greek texts of the Synoptic Gospels. The School's objective is to reconstruct as much as possible of Jesus' Hebrew teaching.

As a means to its objective, the Jerusalem School has begun preparations for production of the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*, a detailed commentary on the Synoptic Gospels that will reflect the insight provided by the School's research. Current research of Jerusalem School members and others is reported in the pages of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

The Jerusalem School was registered in Israel as a non-profit research institute in 1985. Its members are Prof. David Flusser, Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, Prof. Shmuel Safrai, David Bivin, Dr. Weston W. Fields, Dr. R. Steven Notley, Dwight A. Pryor, Halvor Ronning, Mirja Ronning, Prof. Chana Safrai and Prof. Bradford H. Young.

International Synoptic Society

The International Synoptic Society supports the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research by serving as a vehicle through which interested individuals can participate in the School's research.

The Society raises financial support for publication of the Jerusalem School's research, such as the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*; facilitates informal discussion groups focusing on the Synoptic Gospels; sponsors student research assistants and other volunteers who work with the Jerusalem School.

Annual membership in the Society is: Regular £60 or us\$100; Fellow £180 or \$300; Sponsor £300 or \$500; Patron £600 or \$1000; Lifetime membership £3000 or \$5000 and over. Membership dues can be paid in monthly or quarterly installments, and in most currencies.

Members of the Society receive a beautiful certificate of membership and a free subscription to JERUSALEM PERS-

PECTIVE. They are also entitled to unique privileges such as pre-publication releases of *Commentary* materials, including preliminary reconstructions of stories in the conjectured biography of Jesus. Major publications of the Jerusalem School will be inscribed with Society members' names.

Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem School" and designated "ISS." Members in the United States can receive a tax-deductible receipt by sending their dues through the Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliates: Bridges for Peace, P.O. Box 33145, Tulsa, OK 74153 (Tel. 918-663-1998; Fax 918-663-4843); Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429 (Tel. 513-434-4550; Fax 513-439-0230); Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, P.O. Box 2050, Redlands, CA 92373 (Tel. 909-793-4669; Fax 909-793-1071); and HaKeshet, 9939 S. 71st East Ave., Tulsa, OK 74133 (Tel. 918-298-2515; Fax 918-298-8816).

Glossary

aggadah (also **haggadah**) — the ethical sayings and scriptural exposition of the sages, in contrast to their halachic statements; the non-legal part of rabbinic literature in contrast to halachah.

aggadic (a-gad'ik) — pertaining to aggadah.
B.C.E. — abbreviation of "Before Common Era," corresponding to B.C. in Christian terminology. JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE uses B.C.E. and C.E. in articles by Jewish scholars.

bet midrash — (בֵּית מִדְּרָשׁ, *bet mid-RASH*, house of study) center for study and teaching of the Torah. The *bet mid-RASH* was usually connected with a synagogue, and learning took place in the synagogue's assembly hall or in a room adjoining it.

C.E. — abbreviation of "Common Era," corresponding to A.D. in Christian terminology.

darshan — a Jewish preacher who is particularly skilled in aggadah and gives sermons and expositions of the biblical text in accordance with midrashic exegesis.

halachah — (הֲלָכָה, *ha-la-KAH*; plural: הֲלָכוֹת, *ha-la-KOT*, halachot) law, regulation; the legal ruling on a particular issue; the body of Jewish law, especially the legal part of rabbinic literature.

kibbutz (kib-butz) — a collective farm or settlement in Israel.

midrash — (מִדְּרָשׁ, *mid-RASH*) literally, an inquiry or investigation, but as a technical term, "midrash" refers to a rabbinic interpretation, or exposition, of biblical text. The term can also be applied to a collection of such expositions or, capitalized, to the whole midrashic literature written during the first millennium A.D.

mikvaot — (מִקְוֹת, *mik-va'OT*) plural of *mikveh*.

mikveh — (מִקְוֵה, *mik-VEH*, a gathering, accumulation [of water]) pool of water for immersing the body to purify it from ritual uncleanness. The *mikveh* is similarly used to purify vessels (Num. 31:22-23). Immersion in a *mikveh* is also obligatory for proselytes as part of their ceremony of conversion.

R. — the English translation of ר, an abbreviation used in rabbinic literature for the honorific titles רַב (ra-BI, Rabbi), רַבָּנָא (ra-BAN, Rabban), רַבִּי (ra-BI, Rav) and רַבֵּנּוּ (ra-BE-nu, Rabbenu).

Second Temple period — literally, the period from the rebuilding of the Temple (536-516 B.C.) to its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. The term usually refers to the latter part of this period, beginning with the Hasmonean Uprising in 168 B.C. and often extending to the end of the Bar-Kochba Revolt in 135 A.D.

Septuagint — the second-century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

synoptic — adjective from *synopsis* (*synopsis* - *thai*), a Greek word meaning "to view together or at the same time"; specifically, refers to the first three Gospels of the New Testament.

tannaic (ta-na'ik) — pertaining to the Tannaim (תַּנַּיִם, *ta-na'-IM*) sages from Hillel (died c. 10 B.C.) to the sages of the generation (c. 230 A.D.) after Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah. Singular: תַּנָּי (ta-NAY, Tanna).

Transliteration Key

HEBREW & ARAMAIC

Syllables of transliterated words are separated by dots. Capitalization is used to indicate the accented syllable in words of more than one syllable. See p. 11 of the Nov/Dec 1989 issue for a full description of the transliteration system used in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

Consonants

א - ' (silent)
ב - b
ג - g
ד - d
ה - h (for silent)
ו - v
ז - z

ח - h (voiceless guttural)

ט - t

י - y (or silent)

כ - k

ך - k (like ch in the Scottish loch)

ל - l

מ - m

נ - n

ס - s

ע - ' (voiced guttural)

פ - p

צ - f

ק - ts (like ts in nets)

ר - k

ש - sh

ט - s

ת - t

*The form of the letter at the end of a word.

Vowels

(The N is used here as a point of reference.)

א - a (like a in father; rarely like o in bone)

א - a (like a in father)

א - e (like e in net, or e in hey, or somewhere in between)

א - e (like e in net)

א - i (like i in ski)

א - o (like o in bone)

א - u (like u in flu)

א - e (silent, or as short as e in happening, or as long as e in net)

Diphthongs

*א - ai

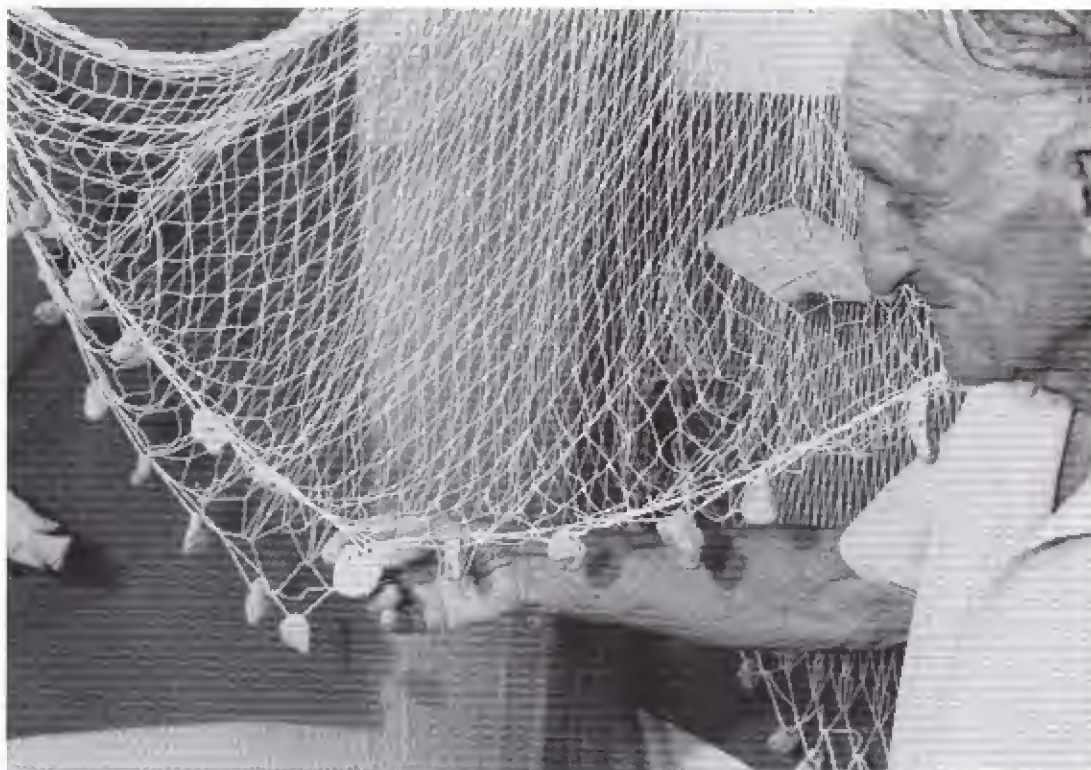
*א - oi

*א - ui

GREEK

Transliterations are based on the Society of Biblical Literature system.

Museum curator Mendel Nun fingering a stone net sinker attached to the replica of an ancient linen cast-net. All of the sinkers along the net's edge were found by Nun on the beaches of the Sea of Galilee.



JANET FRANKOWICZ

Readers' Perspective

(continued from page 9)

hour. This fee covers course study guides, textbooks, supplies such as paper and pens, and postage for prepaid envelopes. I will need 96 credit hours to graduate. I have lots of time in here, so I could take 16–20 credit hours per semester if funding were available.

I need this degree so that I can further my biblical education in a more disciplined manner. I would like to go on to receive my doctorate, but if that is out of my reach I would at least like to earn a Masters Degree in biblical studies. At the present time my main focus is to complete the AA degree. Hopefully, with a high enough grade point average, I can position myself for enrolling in a school known for its academic excellence in Old Testament studies.

Thank you once again for all of the back issues that you sent me. Please pray for me to be able to continue my studies, and especially pray for all of us here at I.S.P. to mature in Jesus. Our prayer is that your ministry will continue to expand throughout the scholarly world.

Loren Huss
Fort Madison, Iowa, U.S.A.

"Remember those in prison as though in prison with them" (Heb. 13:3); JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE

sends free literature (including subscriptions to JP) upon request to prisoners. Loren Huss is presently serving a life sentence at the Iowa State Penitentiary. JP readers who reside in the United States and are interested in helping with Mr. Huss' college tuition, or with the purchase of books for him and other prisoners, may send their contributions to our affiliate in Tulsa, Oklahoma: HaKeshet, 9939 S. 71st East Ave., Tulsa, OK 74133 (Tel. 918-298-2635; Fax 918-298-2426). HaKeshet, directed by Ken and Lenore Mullican, receives and administers funds donated to prisoners. HaKeshet will supply you with a tax-deductible receipt for your donation. From time to time we will publish reports from HaKeshet on the progress of prisoners supported by JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. JP readers may also send financial assistance to prisoners via JP's other affiliates (see the full list of affiliates, p. 29), or through our office in Jerusalem. — Ed.

CORRECTION

The "x" mentioned in the explanation that accompanied the reconstruction drawing of the Temple Mount's southern wall (p. 30 of the Sept.–Dec. 1994 issue) was inadvertently omitted from the drawing. The "x" should have appeared on the monumental stairway, 1.5 centimeters to the right of the fold separating pages 30 and 31, and 9 centimeters below the upper side of the black frame surrounding the drawing.

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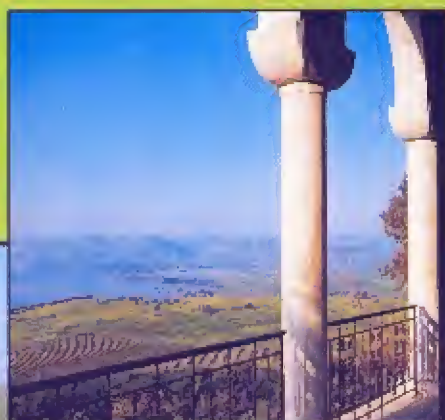
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**Contact us about incentives
for group leaders.**

◀ Student group inspecting the remains of the ancient synagogue at Chorazin. Inset photo: The Plain of Gennesaret and the Sea of Galilee.